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ABSTRACT

This practicum study sought to increase child care staff's ability to transfer what they learned from training to the classroom and thereby to increase developmentally appropriate educational practice. Specifically, the project sought to increase positive interactions in the child care setting, increase the use of the outdoors as a learning environment, and help educators adapt better to student needs. Parents, staff, and classroom volunteers participated in a 15-hour course on child development; the course took place over 6 weeks. A support group for teachers was also formed. Seven additional weeks of instruction on advanced topics was offered. Following this instruction, staff engaged in developmentally appropriate educational practices. However, some staff found it difficult to transfer into practice what they had learned about the potential of outdoor education. Overall, staff were better able to adapt their management of child behavior to changing situations. (Five appendices include a checklist of developmentally appropriate practices and an outdoor learning survey. Contains 22 references.) (JW)

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Increasing Application of Developmentally Appropriate Practice by Childcare and Head Start Staff Following Trainings

by

Martha B. Naber

Cluster 43

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Martha B. Naber under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Aug. 26, 1995

Date of Final Approval

June L Delano

June Delano, Ph.D., Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE i

APPROVAL PAGE ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

Description of the Work Setting 1
Description of the Writer's Role 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 4

Description of the Problem Situation 4
Problem Documentation 4
Causes of the Problem 6
Literature Review 8

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES 11

Goal Statement 11
Specific Outcomes and Evaluation 11

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY 14

Discussion of Possible Solutions 14
Selected Solution 20
Report of Action Taken 21

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results 29
Discussion 32
Recommendations 36
Dissemination 36

REFERENCES 37

APPENDIX A 40

APPENDIX B 43

APPENDIX C 45

APPENDIX D 47

APPENDIX E 49

ABSTRACT

Increasing Application of Developmentally Appropriate Practice by Childcare and Head Start Staff Following Trainings. Naber, Martha B., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Inservice Training Early Childhood Education/Developmentally Appropriate Practice/Training Plans/Professional Development Lattice/Transfer of Learnings/Parent and Volunteer Training.

This practicum was designed to establish a method to increase the transfer of learning from agency child development trainings to the classroom to increase developmentally appropriate practice by staff. The major goals were to increase the positive adult/child interactions in the classroom and outdoors, to increase the understanding and use of the outdoors as a learning environment for children, to reduce the rigidity with which staff managed children's behavior, and to increase the use of developmentally appropriate practice by staff with children. All these goals would lead to establishing higher quality services to children in child care and Head Start.

The writer implemented a multi-faceted solution to increase the transfer of learnings from trainings. A six week 15 hour course in child development was designed and taught by the writer. Seven weeks of more advanced child development topics were designed and taught. Following the trainings the writer completed observations in the regional classrooms. Results were shared with the teachers in each setting. Five teachers participated in a mentor program. A support group met to be a forum for dialogue and reflection. A course was designed and taught for parents and volunteers who would be in the classroom. Several teachers visited and observed in other classrooms to increase their understanding of a particular technique.

The outcomes were met for the project with an increase in all sites of the use of developmentally appropriate practice. A reduction in rigidity of child management, an increase in positive verbal adult/child interaction, and increased use of the outdoors as a learning environment all were observed. Offering staff a variety of ways to participate in their own growth and understanding led to unexpected positive results. The agency has established a training plan. All new staff will participate in the basic child development training to establish clear understandings of the expectations of developmentally appropriate practice for their classroom work.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Work Setting

The writer's work setting was a 28 year old multi-service community action program serving a very large geographical area in a rural northern state. The agency receives over $11,300,000.00 in state and federal funding to offer programs in Housing, Health Services, Nutrition, Child and Family Services, Community Services, and Transportation services. Clients live in two counties, and the agency has three offices with many satellite sites to offer one or more particular service. Almost 200 people are employees of the agency.

The agency program in which the writer worked was Child Development in the Child and Family Services area. The Child Development program offers Head Start and child care services to 304 and 75 children respectively, ranging in age from infants and toddlers to age six. The program area has 20 sites, some in public schools, some in private buildings, and some in agency owned buildings, offering this range of child development services. Five sites are offering home-based services due to the rural nature of the geographical area. One hundred and twenty miles separates the most distant points of the program covering both small towns and rural areas. One year ago the child development program formed three regions to better serve its many sites.

Each region is comprised of five or six sites, with additional home based sites supervised by family service staff.

The region the writer supervised was comprised of three Head Start locations, two Wraparound Head Start/Childcare locations, and one child care location. These programs were all located within twenty five miles of each other. Five were in one county with the sixth one in the other county. Two of the locations had double sessions of Head Start serving 16 children in both a morning and an afternoon session. One site offered only a single morning session for 17 children. The two Head Start/child care locations served 20 children each, and the child care location served 18 children.

The 22 staff in the six locations was made up of classroom aides, assistant teachers, and teachers. As well, numerous community volunteers such as Foster Grandparents, high school students, and students from a local college and those doing community service to meet court requirements worked at many sites. Parents were also volunteers in all the Head Start classrooms. Each teacher was the on-site supervisor for the educational staff. The writer directly supervised the six teachers and oversaw the supervision of all the other staff. All the employed staff members had a variety of backgrounds and educational preparation for their roles ranging from those without high school diplomas to those with four year degrees in elementary education or early childhood development. Several staff members began their association with the agency as Head Start parents many years ago and have continued their education and connection with the agency as an employee. The staff also varied widely in the years of experience at the agency from less than one year to over 20 years.

The children in the program locations represented the mainly white

population of the area. They came from low income families with multiple needs, and frequently brought special needs to the program. Some of the children were placed in the program through the child protective services of the state human services agency.

Description of the Writer's Role

The writer's role in the agency was that of an education supervisor for one of the three regions. The writer supervised all the staff hiring, training, orienting new staff, and evaluating performances at least annually. The writer also assured program quality through updating curricula, ongoing classroom observations, conducting meetings with teachers on a weekly basis, and acting as a resource for information related to total program operation in the region. The writer worked closely with the Family Services Supervisor in the region to develop and assure implementation of case plans for assigned children and families. The writer was in this position for twenty months having moved from a direct service position as a teacher in an infant and toddler care program.

The writer brought a varied background to the position with years of teaching infants to adults in many programs in public and private settings. Home economics course work in college laid a sound foundation for moving into the field of early childhood education. The writer was also a contracted trainer for ten years with a variety of agencies teaching many early childhood concepts to various target groups. A deeply held belief in the right of a child to experience developmentally appropriate practice guided the writer to this practicum project.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Description of the Problem Situation

In spite of participating in many hours of training workshops staff continued to practice in ways that were not developmentally appropriate, in classrooms and outside, throughout the region the writer supervised. All staff who worked more than 20 hours a week must participate in at least 24 hours of training each year to meet state licensing requirements. The child development program offered more than the necessary minimum hours of training to all staff each year, some of which was mandatory and some was elective. The trainers were from within the agency and "outside" contracted trainers. Once in a while a teacher offered a training to peers. The writer identified as the problem that staff continued to practice in ways that were not developmentally appropriate both inside and outside the classroom with the children even after many hours of training.

Problem Documentation

Data was collected in five ways to prove that this problem existed in the region supervised by the writer. Observations were done in all programs supervised on at least three occasions documenting, in each case, incidence of

inappropriate practices by adults in the learning environment. A sampling of the types of practices observed were poor arrangement of the learning environment, limited techniques used to help children resolve conflicts with other children, rigidity in dealing with classroom behaviors, poor verbal interactions between staff and children, art activities offered with planned results, outside time used to "burn off energy" with no learning opportunities, and mealtimes and circles planned in a very structured and rigid fashion. Training to address each of these practices had previously been offered to staff.

An interview was done with the program director of child development to discover the goals of the program related to the practice of employees and the financial investment in training. The director stated that the goal of any training for staff was to improve their classroom practices to meet those of their job descriptions and of developmentally appropriate practice. The director also said that over $12,000 was spent in the last fiscal year for training and that the greatest frustration related to this investment in the training for her was the lack of transfer of new learnings to the practices of classroom staff. She continued to see and hear of practices that were not developmentally appropriate in spite of many training dollars being spent. (Interview , June 1994)

The personnel records of the region staff were reviewed for the past two years to assess training records to reveal all training previously participated in by the staff members. All staff met the required number of hours in a variety of ways. The preservice training offered by the child development program provided many of these hours on a variety of topic areas, including the areas where poor practices were observed. Trainings on communication, discipline, classroom activities, working with parents, special needs children, and child abuse were noted. Several staff had attended NAEYC national or regional

conferences. Most of the training had been one-session events with no follow up offered or attended. Several staff had participated in college level courses, which met for 15 weeks. One was close to completion of a BS in early childhood education.

The performance evaluations for the last two years were reviewed to identify goals set by supervisors at that time for staff growth and training. When compiled, the list of suggested training and skill growth areas covered all the areas in developmentally appropriate practice. The areas of adult-child interaction and classroom management were the most frequently cited as areas for needed growth. Assertiveness was also a highly recommended area for personal growth.

Finally, reports by the mental health consultant were reviewed to discover any observations that had been made in each site related to developmentally appropriate practice. It was determined that the Harms and Clifford Environmental Rating Scale tool was used to assess each site. These observations at all sites reported areas for staff to work on improving. One area identified for work was room arrangement to reduce undesirable behaviors by children, a second area was to improve the quality of the staff/child interaction, and a third area was to look for creative problem solving methods for staff to use with children in the classrooms.

Each of these data collection methods added evidence that this problem did exist in the writer's region. Each method gave further reason why this problem needed to be solved in the region if children were to be given the best possible experience in any of the program sites.

Causes of the Problem

The causes of the problem were seen as varied and multiple. Some of

the staff evaluations did not set clear expectations for the staff to change inappropriate methods of working with children, so staff did not feel any urgency about transferring learnings from a workshop or training to the classroom. The standards of the child development program continued to rise and some staff had not improved their practice to meet these expectations. The former supervisors had not held staff accountable in the same way as was done by the writer. Without a sense of urgency some staff did not work to improve their practice. This allowed practice that was not developmentally appropriate to continue.

A second cause of the problem was that there had never been an established unified training plan for individual growth or for the entire program area. Persons were hired and never expected to enter a series of trainings or set a plan for themselves for personal growth beginning where they were at the time of hiring. Volunteers came in with no training, substitutes were hired with no training required, and classroom aides began work with no training. Training requests were initiated by individual staff rather than set by supervisors. Trainings were attended sometimes based on a staff member's interest or to meet the required number of training hours rather than necessarily to improve practice.

Supervisors changed frequently creating inconsistency in expectations for acceptable classroom practices. Early childhood education experiences frequent turnover in staff and this was the case as the writer's agency expanded and rearranged the regional organization. Each change created differences in style of supervision and the specific expectations of practice. The vigor with which supervisors held staff responsible for developmentally appropriate practice varied creating more or less urgency to change practice on the part of

staff.

Finally, some of the staff hired in the past had limited education or experience in early childhood education. This created situations where the staff did not have some of the basic understandings needed to be the best staff for the classroom. The job descriptions and requirements have been rewritten recently, yet there were still staff who were hired with a certain level of skill who didn't feel any urgency to change their practice. Some of the staff grew up in homes where the child care methods were not appropriate and these formed the basis for their understandings of children and the care they need to be given. These "old ways" frequently did not meet the expectations of developmentally appropriate practice.

Literature Review

The writer found it difficult to find much previous work on the problem in particular, but identified many articles which focused on the expectation that staff were practicing in a developmentally appropriate manner as one of the determinants for any program with high quality child care. Areas explored in the search of the literature were early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), training issues, application of new learnings, mentoring, and child care training.

In 1987 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) adopted a position statement edited by Bredekamp which stated "the major determinant of program quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in program practice--the degree to which the program is developmentally appropriate" (p. 2). Examining any program by this standard will point out areas where the staff is not contributing to a high quality program. NAEYC further states that "the developmental appropriateness of an early

childhood program is most apparent in the interactions between children and adults" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 9). This skill was noted to be lacking among several of the staff in the writer's region and contributed to a lower quality program.

In 1993 NAEYC adopted a position statement on professional development which said in part that "serious barriers remain that undermine access to high quality services for all children" including the lack of "an effective system of early childhood professional development that provides meaningful opportunities for career advancement to ensure a well qualified and stable work force" (Staff, 1994, p. 68). Without a progressive unified training plan the writer's agency diminishes the quality possible for children and risks losing staff once they reach a certain level of skill. This position statement also stated that regulations about staff preparation and qualification may be minimal in some states and that care givers can enter the field without previous professional preparation. (Staff, 1993) This was seen in the writer's agency with some entry level staff (and many volunteers) having been hired without a high school diploma. The writer's state does have very minimal qualifications for child care staff to meet.

Arnett (1989) studied 59 care givers in 22 centers to determine how attitudes of care givers related to their behaviors with children and what impacted on these attitudes. Arnett identified care givers' rigid conformity, lack of warmth and responsiveness, and punitiveness towards children as practices that were not developmentally appropriate and which lowered program quality. These attitudes and behaviors were related to less training in early childhood education.

Berk (1985) found that care giver actions were related to their education and that a lack of training "made a difference in the care givers' interactions with children, increasing restrictions, decreasing encouragements, decreasing verbal skills development, and increasing the use of direct forms of guidance." (p. 103) These observed behaviors were similar to those found by Arnett, and to those observed in the writer's region.

The Office of Education (1975) study found that training for child care workers "has been, by and large, haphazard and that the training appropriate to a (new) worker is not usually known." (p. 47) This would mean that when a worker is hired the actual practice in a classroom with children may not be known, nor is it known what training may be necessary for them to meet high quality practice standards. Without an agency plan for training, each employee would be receiving haphazard training which may or may not meet their individual goals and needs.

Shirah, Hewitt, and McNair (1993) stated that frustration and/or unsatisfactory performance can result from lack of training. They further state that "all too often, on the job training occurs at random, lacks sequence, and is devoid of most accepted child development principles and practices." (p. 31) Their work supports the contentions of the Office of Education almost 20 years earlier. Koralek, Colker, and Dodge (1993) also stated that "training should not be viewed as a one shot inoculation - to be offered at orientation and then forgotten,.....but should be ongoing - building on what has come before, addressing what is currently needed, and anticipating future concerns." (p. ix) Any agency with early childhood educators which does not have in place this broad scope of training opportunities and planning will risk having a less prepared, less skilled staff and a lower quality program.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION TOOLS

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Goal Statement

The writer's goal was that the staff would demonstrate an increased application of developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms after participating in trainings. This would lead to an increase in the quality of the experience offered to children in the child care and Head Start programs in the writer's region.

Specific Outcomes and Evaluations

The writer expected four outcomes would be initiated by this goal.

1. 10 of 22 staff will demonstrate an increase in their understanding of DAP in such a way to implement it in their classrooms. This understanding will be evaluated by observing practice within each classroom to determine if the staff are meeting 15 of 20 items describing DAP (see Appendix A), and by interviewing each staff member.

2. 15 of 22 staff will demonstrate an increase in positive verbal interactions with children to be measured by using an interaction rating scale in

each classroom with each staff member.(See Appendix B) The standard of achievement will be 10 of 13 exhibited.

3. Five of six teachers will plan developmentally appropriate activities with children in the outdoor learning environment . This will be measured by the use of a staff survey and observations of each outside learning environment to determine if staff are meeting 9 of 12 criteria for DAP in an outside environment. (See Appendices C and D)

4. 10 of 22 staff will demonstrate a reduction in rigidity in child management in the classroom and outside with the children. This will be measured by observing the classrooms for instances when staff demonstrate use of techniques 2, 4, 6, and 8 on the survey based on Prescott, et al. (1967) (See Appendix E) the desired rate of the use of these selected guidance skills will be in 6 of 10 instances.

Measurement of Outcomes

Five different measurement tools were developed to assess growth in skill in the four targeted areas. The first checklist (Appendix A) drew 20 items from the work of Bredekamp (1987) which identified specific practices that are developmentally appropriate. The checklist was used at least twice in each site to measure growth in understanding of DAP by staff. Additional comments by each staff member were noted on each checklist to clarify any item.

The second evaluation tool (Appendix B) rated the interactions between adults and children after training. This checklist was also developed based on the work of Bredekamp (1987). This checklist was used during the classroom observations before and after training experiences. Reports by the mental health consultant of classroom interactions between adults and children were also reviewed to collect additional data to assess this item.

The practice in the outdoor learning environment was measured by an initial interview with each of the six teachers (Appendix C) and by the use of a checklist (Appendix D) developed from the work of Baker (1966). The checklist was used to evaluate both the planning done by the teachers and the actual outdoor opportunities available to the children.

The final tool developed (Appendix E) was used during the classroom observations to assess staff skills in child and classroom management after training. A tally was kept during the observation of the frequency of use of each guidance style. This tool is based on the work of Prescott, et al. as cited by Berk (1985).

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

The writer identified that in the region supervised by the writer the staff continued to practice in ways that were not developmentally appropriate both inside and outside the classroom with the children even after many hours of training. This in turn diminished the quality of the experience offered to children in the child care and Head Start programs in the writer's region.

Discussion of Possible Solutions

The literature revealed many possible solutions that had been used by various programs and researchers to increase the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) of staff in early childhood programs. Jones and Lakin (1986) wrote that offering staff opportunities for reflection and dialogue with other early childhood professionals about their current practice would aid the staff in improving their practice. They suggested that this dialogue would keep staff interested in their work and help them get better at it. They went on to offer suggestions for initiating, facilitating, and using such reflections and dialogues for growth in practice among staff members.

Carter and Jones (1990) expanded on this dialogue process by urging directors to be role models for less experienced staff to observe, then to offer opportunities for dialogue and reflection. Directors would spend time in classrooms playing with the children, sharing observations with the staff and

emphasizing the importance of play with the children. They suggested that play skills rather than academic skills should be emphasized in ongoing training. They further suggested using hands on activities in training to help staff "construct knowledge about child development." (p.28) Stallings and Freiberg (1991) also studied the use of observation of staff in classrooms and how to use this information to have staff set their own training goals.

Severeide (1992) wrote that self study in a small group in which staff could determine the match between their practice and a set of known standards for developmentally appropriate practice would cause staff to look at their own strengths and weaknesses and to initiate a plan of action for self growth. Times for "guided reflection and non-evaluative conversation with peers" (p.1) would promote professionalism and challenge staff to really look at their practice. Severeide further suggested that this would increase self confidence along with skill level and promote leadership development.

Each of these works suggested that self reflection of practice, and dialogue with others, would create conditions that encouraged staff growth and learning. Other writers suggested additional techniques to improve practices of staff.

Harrison (1980) reported on using case studies and simulations for groups to work on together to bridge the gap between theory and practice in classrooms . This was a concern in the writer's agency when staff participated in trainings but did not seem to transfer learnings from the training to their work sites. Harrison found that these techniques worked well after the trainees had basic human relations training and self evaluation skills. These techniques were well received by the groups and did bridge the gap from theory to practice.

Chavez and Burton (1985) studied a program that brought training to

paraprofessionals in rural areas and found that when theory was applied to the trainees' work site they benefited the most. They found that the training, based on the CDA program curriculum, increased self confidence, improved observational skills, and created a better understanding of activities for children. The more closely the theory was applied to local needs and concerns the greater the benefit for the trainees. Another in service program was reviewed by Gillis-Olion and Olion in 1984. This program was a three year in service training program which they found resulted in growth in confidence, and an increase in positive interactions with children by the trainees. The program was training paraprofessionals to work with mainstreamed handicapped children. Though the trainees were not necessarily in early childhood education, similar findings came to light. The closer the practice and theory were made, the greater the learnings by the participants. Observations at work sites, individual sessions for some trainees, site visits before classroom work, small group and large group sessions, and awarding C.E.U.s helped in the success of the program.

Jones, in the introduction to Growing Teachers (1993), suggested that the stage of the teacher's own development must be considered in looking at a training plan or at a facilitation model for teacher development. Jones further suggested that teachers must learn about teaching from observing what happens in their classrooms, from talking with others, by making choices, and by being empowered to teach and grow. Jones wrote that there were, however, baseline skills and expectations for all teachers that must be in place before teachers are given some choices for growth areas. As teachers grow the results will not always be predictable, yet will reflect the person's choices for their own growth.

Beers (1993) wrote of a partnership project between a college and three Head Start programs using the CDA training model for training staff. The staff worked in rural areas, and had to reconcile the national standards with the Native American culture in which they were teaching. Beers, as the instructor at the college, had the staff writing portfolios which mirrored one aspect of the culture-the storytelling. Answering the two questions of what do the staff do and why do they do it formed the basis for the writing portfolio. This gave everyone a way to reflect on their practice and to look at areas for growth.

Jones, et al. (1993) discussed the many options of staff development offered in the Pasadena Partnership Project some of which were mentor teachers, seminars, visiting other classrooms, and observations by supervisors. They cautioned that with "many players in the partnership, multiple lines of communication and understanding had to be established." (p.60) All new staff had to meet baseline competency before moving on to further choices in their growth. They also cautioned that change takes time, maybe years.

Creaser (1993) discussed having teaching staff as co-investigators to increase their observation skills of children at play and then to learn new skills from their own observations. The observations contributed to the staff's knowledge about play, about how the children were playing, and about what they could do to enhance that play. Readings and discussions in groups were held to explore the learnings. The sharing in the group could contribute to all staff learning from the experience.

Poelle (1993) discussed the benefits for all when a mentoring program is established that can draw on the skills and experiences of the mentor and encourage a newer staff member to grow. The benefits for all involved ripple out to others in the early childhood community. Poelle was a facilitator for a

group of mentors in California who met weekly to discuss their work with the "interns". This author found that observation by the intern in the mentor's class and then being observed in his/her own classroom was the most valuable learning portion of the program. This opportunity to try new ways and then to reflect on their success was helpful to all involved. The theme in many of the articles read, of observation, reflection, and dialogue, was suggested as the way to encourage each teacher to grow wherever he or she was currently in their professional development.

Koralek, Colker, and Dodge (1993) emphasized that supervisors and trainers must work together to "ensure that knowledge is translated appropriately into practice." (p. ix) If this happened in the writer's agency the expectations of the staff would be built into any training the agency offered. There would be follow up observations to check on the translation of learning from course work to classroom. They continued by writing " knowledge gained from formal education and orientation training must be applied in ways that reflect their true intent if they are going to positively effect the quality of care offered." (p. ix) The writer had this as one of the goals of this project.

Combining instructional modules with field experiences in child care sites increased the retention of child care workers and improved the quality of the staff skills in a southern state. (Shirah, Hewitt, and McNair, 1993) Nine curriculum units were designed for 74 hours of classroom training which was supplemented by 24 hours of child care practice. The success rate for the trainees was very high with all being hired in the early childhood field after completion of the course work. This program, however, was not part of an existing agency, but provided the training prior to employment.

Arnett (1989) discussed the design of the Bermuda College training for

child care workers that involved two years of course work followed by a practicum with a skilled teacher. This resulted in more positive attitudes and behavior changes for the staff. Arnett confirmed that "training is in fact related to the attitudes and behavior of care givers. Training was found to be related to less authoritarian childrearing attitudes and to a more positive interaction style with children, with less punitiveness and detachment." (p.549) The course work covered such areas as communication with children, child development, health and nutrition, and activities with children. The practicum was a two week period with an experienced teacher.

The report of the competency based training (Office of Education, 1975) determined that the ten modules could be very effective in training people to be entry level care givers in a cost effective manner. Such topics as body movement and rhythm, outdoors, circle time, science, transitions, and conversation with children were subjects of the modules. This report found that university or college level education did not necessarily prepare someone for child care work, and that some excellent child care workers had no academic degree. These ten units would, however, prepare someone for entrance into the field.

Finally, NAEYC (Staff, 1994) has outlined a "lattice of professional development" (p. 71) which specified the knowledge and abilities that are required of early childhood professionals and the principles of effective professional development. One of the basic assumptions by the NAEYC in working on the career lattice was that the "adults who work with young children and their families are key to providing high quality programs." (p.71) The writer had the goal of providing the adults in the region supervised with the training and skills they needed to provide this high quality programming. NAEYC has

further identified the common knowledge that is necessary for a baseline in early childhood skills. These included an understanding of child development and planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum in the classroom.

Selected Solution

The writer was interested in how a combination approach using many of the previously mentioned strategies would work in the agency to increase the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice of all staff. NAEYC was clear in its statement of baseline knowledge for all in the early childhood field.(1993) This formed the basis of the child development training offered to staff. The work by Jones and Lakin (1986) and Severeide (1992) on offering staff opportunities for reflection and self study was tried as part of a support group started in the region. Harrison's (1980) suggestion that using case studies helps students transfer learnings from the classroom was incorporated into training classes. The work of Carter and Jones (1990) regarding offering opportunities for the trainees to construct their own knowledge as part of the classes was also incorporated. The courses designed for the training were viewed as pieces of a whole program which was available to increase the confidence, skill, and positive interactions of staff with children. Gillis-Olion and Olion (1984) and Jones , et. al. (1993) mentioned mentor teachers and visiting other classrooms as ways for teacher growth that was tried. Stallings and Freiberg (1991) and Jones, et al. (1993) both suggested classroom observation and feedback for staff as beneficial and this was incorporated into the total project.

The writer was prepared and excited to design and implement a multi-technique approach to increasing the transfer of learnings from trainings and to

increase the developmentally appropriate practices of staff and of volunteers in the agency. The writer believed this would work because it offered a variety of opportunities for any staff member to participate in his/her own development and to find the most appropriate way to grow as it improved program quality. The writer had provided training on a limited basis to the agency which had been successful and was prepared to extend this role within the agency to teach classes in the outline.

Report of Action Taken

The writer identified multiple steps to be accomplished for successful completion of this project, including several that took place concurrently. Using the information gathered from the examination of personnel training records and evaluations and the component plans for the Head Start program a proposal was made regarding suggested courses to be offered to staff. An outline of training needs was developed and presented to the program director for approval. The courses suggested and subsequently approved were designed to be a series that built on previous levels of knowledge and experience. They were planned to meet the various needs for further education of parents, volunteers, and staff to improve everyone's practice in the classrooms and outside.

Throughout the project the writer kept a notebook with weekly progress notes. The calendar of implementation had many changes from the proposed calendar, as the agency made requests and the classes and classroom needs arose. Several unexpected events happened during the project. The agency contracted with a professor to teach the CDA program for several staff who did not meet the requirements for Head Start staff. This reinforced the expectation that DAP would be established in classrooms and supported the agency

position of continued education and growth for staff. Six staff in the writer's region participated in this program. The second event was that during month 5 of the project the writer was asked to facilitate a focus group gathered to discuss in-house training opportunities. This group offered many suggestions for improvement in training some of which the writer could incorporate into the trainings being planned. Several parents identified their desire to learn how to cook. The writer taught four cook shops in addition to the trainings. These taught skills,but more importantly become a self esteem booster. Two staff all participated in these classes. They were taught in months 6, 7, 8, and 9.

The final unexpected event was when the program director offered the writer the job of training coordinator, and contracted trainer after the writer resigned her position at the end of the program year. This was welcomed by the writer as the trainings offered in the implementation period can and will continue.

The agency requested that a workshop be presented during the preservice for all staff about using the outdoors as a learning environment. This had been one of the training areas identified as needed by the staff. This workshop was completed with all the staff from all sites in attendance. The Education Coordinator felt that it was greatly needed not only in the writer's region, and wanted it to be a mandatory training. This changed the training calendar, but did make clear to all staff the expectations for outdoor learning in developmentally appropriate ways. This also gave the staff some guidance in finding further information about outdoor learning and began to stretch the understanding of some staff who saw outdoor activity as limited to burning off energy.

During the first three weeks of the implementation phase of the project,

all six sites were visited, the checklist for the observations was shared, and a time was set to review the training plans for all the staff at the site. At this time the expectation of developmentally appropriate practice being implemented was discussed. Written resources were found at each site with specific criteria for DAP and a short discussion of what DAP is was held. It became clear to the writer that some formal way to track training goals needed to be established. A form was designed, used throughout the year, and found to be successful. It was shared with the other two Education Supervisors at the agency for possible implementation in their regions. It was found to be a useful tool for the writer when the time came to complete staff evaluations at the program year end as the goal, the efforts and the progress made in training for the year had been recorded.

Courses were designed as determined to be needed and a specific training calendar set. The calendar for the fall classes was distributed to the staff at a preservice session. The initial training was in basic child development to establish a baseline of knowledge. The syllabus was planned for 6 sessions of 2 1/2 hours each. The agency believed that six sessions were important rather than 8 as staff in particular would be traveling to the classes after working a full day. Due to the large geographical region, the agency asked that the training be repeated in two locations to maximize the numbers of staff who could attend. This was planned into the calendar. The agency also requested that the brochure announcing the classes be distributed to other appropriate agencies in the community, to the schools where the agency had Head Start programs, to family child care organizations, and to the child development services organization in the community. In one location 18 people participated, in the second location 16 participated. The participants

represented all levels of previous education, and all levels of positions in the agency. Several participants were family child care providers from the communities where the agency had Head Start programs. Out of the 22 staff in the writer's region 11 participated in the child development series.

The writer taught the 6 week 15 hour course in basic child development at the two locations during months 2 and 3 of the project. The course was planned to draw on the work of Piaget, Erikson, Freud, and Kohlberg as the whole child developed. The mid course and course evaluations revealed that the participants had learned new ideas and had expanded their way of thinking with children. The questions that they raised during the classes demonstrated that they were stretching their thinking about the way to work with children. A discussion was held during the course related to the issue of transfer of learnings to the classroom. In four of the sites the writer supervised this transfer from the course was observed within two weeks. One classroom was rearranged, more creativity materials were put into the art area, and a literacy center was established. The outdoor environment in three sites was greatly enhanced. Several of the participants commented that all parents should have to take a course like this to prepare them to be parents.

The agency also asked that an initial session of training for parents and classroom volunteers be implemented in the fall. This would enable some of the class participants to become approved substitutes earlier in the year after completing the course and policy council approval. The writer agreed to this request, designing an informational flyer for distribution to all sites. Some sites chose to distribute a copy to each parent in the program while others posted a flyer in a prominent location for parents to read. This was completed in month one of the implementation. The information about the course was also

distributed to all the Policy Council members at one of the fall meetings.

This course was 6 sessions and 15 hours in length. In planning this course the writer consulted with classroom teachers in the region to determine particular skill areas to include in the course. The writer also consulted with the Health and Nutrition Coordinator to add the topics that were important in this area of Head Start. For some of the 10 parents and community people in the first section of this course it was the first class they had had since high school. The writer assigned homework and several reading assignments which were discussed in class. They students were generally excited about the classes, and enjoyed the information about Head Start, child development, and classroom operations. This class covered agency policies, classroom operations, expectations of anyone in the classrooms, skills building in reading books, creativity, music, communication with children, and supervision in a classroom. Following the class work 10 hours of volunteer work in a classroom was arranged. An observation checklist was completed at each site the student volunteered in. This gave the writer immediate feedback about the student and their understanding of their role as well as their practice of DAP which was a topic covered in the class. The first section of the course (repeated twice more) met during months 2 and 3 of the project. The volunteer time with the observations was during month 4.

Further trainings were scheduled to be offered in topics identified by staff as needed to develop their skill in specific areas or as identified by observations as needed. These 7 topical sessions of 2 1/2 hours each were scheduled to be held following the completion of the basic child development. The three major topic areas were communication skills with adults and children, child management in the classroom (preventive behavior strategies), and creativity in

art, music and construction. A brochure was developed and distributed all 20 sites in agency as well as to the programs and agencies that received the child development brochure. Since the writer was not highly skilled in the creativity in art, music and construction, other presenters were arranged by the writer as teachers. The writer taught the communication sessions, and with the agency mental health consultant taught the preventive behavior strategies. The writer attended all sessions to continue the contact with the participants. As with the basic child development this series of classes was taught in two locations. In one site 28 people attended, in the other site 14 attended. Another child development agency had 14 people attend at the first location. This course was taught during months 6 and 7 of the project.

During months 8 and 9 two more sections of the parent/volunteer training were held at two locations. In one section there were 7 students who completed the course and in the final section there were 6 who completed the course.

An on going support group was established in the second month of the implementation and met monthly for six months to discuss developmentally appropriate practice, practice issues, and to develop individual plans for personal growth. The writer's role at these meetings varied from that of a teacher, to a facilitator, to a supporter of individual growth. As a result of the group meetings prop boxes were developed in ten topic areas to be used throughout the agency. Discussions about and experiments with science, outdoor education, group gatherings, and curriculum planning were incorporated into the support groups meetings. These meetings led to immediate changes in some of the practices of several of the staff in the writer's region. Some of the skills learned were then taught to 2 summer youth employees for their growth. Ongoing observations were offered to staff to

generate opportunities for reflection by them of their current practice and possibilities for growth to be examined. Three teachers visited other programs to observe another teacher in the classroom. One had the goal of observing management techniques, one for planning with children, one for the use of the child observation record.

Staff were encouraged by the writer to participate in the existing, but rarely used agency mentor program, with five teaching staff participating in the program during the project. The writer met with each teacher desiring to participate in the mentor program to establish goals, and set a time line for completion of the project. All five of the teachers wanted to learn more about the use of the child observation record (COR) that had been established as a developmental assessment tool. Two other highly skilled teachers were asked and agreed to be mentors for the five teachers. The agency had established 2 forms to be used by the mentor and student. These were completed with the writer and the mentoring began. The writer met with the mentors twice during the time working on the project. The teacher/students felt they had learned skills for using the COR and confidence in what they were doing by working with the mentor.

Throughout the project observations were completed three times using the checklists the writer developed in each site the writer supervised. These were completed in months 2, 5 and 9. Since the writer visited each site weekly, informal observations were completed regularly. Areas to work on as well as progress toward greater DAP were discussed with the staff. Observations by the mental health consultant using the Program Implementation Profile (PIP) tool were reviewed with each teacher as they were completed. These noted strengths and areas to work on also.

Evaluations were built into each training to improve the courses , to give the writer feedback on the usefulness of the course materials, and whether the learnings could be transferred to their classroom settings. The program director asked to review the evaluations to monitor the training project.

The classroom observations gave the writer feedback by demonstrating any changes made in staff behaviors following the trainings. The follow up discussion with the teachers provided an opportunity to discuss DAP in specific instances. The observations of one classroom and one staff member in particular led to a termination of employment due to her inability to practice in developmentally appropriate ways. This took place in month 9 of the project.

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The writer identified that staff continued to practice in ways that were not developmentally appropriate inside and outside their classrooms with the children in spite of participating in many hours of trainings. The writer designed a training plan that included teaching several courses for staff, parents, and classroom volunteers, establishing a support group for staff , encouraging the participation by staff in the mentor program, and following trainings with observations in the classrooms to monitor change in practice.

The first outcome stated that 10 of 22 staff would demonstrate an increase in their understanding of DAP in such a way to implement it in their classrooms. This outcome was met with 17 staff demonstrating an increase in DAP after training. The observations done at each site showed evidence of this growth of understanding in every site. From the first observation it was clear that two teachers already had an understanding of DAP , yet the planning they did during the project more closely met the criteria for DAP both inside and outside. One staff was terminated due to consistently poor practice with the children and her lack of willingness to improve her practice. The checklists (Appendix A) were completed at each site with notes discussing individual staff

behaviors added to the forms.

The following chart lists each site and the changes in frequency of DAP being demonstrated in and out of the classroom.

ITEMS OF DAP DEMONSTRATED

SITE	OBSERVATION	1	2	3
1		9	14	16
2		19	19	20
3		8	12	16
4		18	19	19
5		11	15	16
6		7	12	15

The second outcome proposed that 15 of 22 staff would demonstrate an increase in positive verbal interactions with children. It was difficult to observe each staff member demonstrating each item so the observations were completed for the classroom staff as a group. There was an increase in positive verbal interactions with children in all the sites. The standard of achievement of 10 out of 13 was met in all classrooms. Four of six classrooms demonstrated 13 of 13 items on the final observation. The other two classrooms demonstrated 11 of 13 items. No staff was observed standing over a child to speak to them. Quiet caring tones were used, unless the play required another tone. Instances throughout each observation demonstrated how rich the environments were in language and time with an adult.

The third outcome was that five of six teachers would plan developmentally appropriate activities with children in the outdoor learning environment. The standard to meet was 9 of 11 criteria on a checklist

(Appendix D). Each teacher was interviewed (Appendix C) to assess attitudes and understanding of the potential for the outdoors for learning. Five of the six teachers met the standard set demonstrating dramatic changes in the look of the play area and the equipment available to the children, the activities offered outside to choose from, the planning for time outside, and the understanding by the teachers of the outdoors as a learning environment. The sixth teacher made some changes but not enough to meet the standard set. The interviews revealed that all the teachers have the knowledge about the outdoor environment yet one has not been able to transfer this to practice. The understanding that anything used inside could also be used outside was held by all six teachers. The staff reported a reduction in the conflicts and the tears outdoors after they had worked to enhance this learning environment. They observed the children in different types of play in the outdoors and saw them exploring materials in a different way. They also reported that it was more difficult for some staff to stretch their thinking to plan activities in the outdoors that were traditionally indoors.

The final outcome was that 10 of 22 staff would demonstrate a reduction in rigidity in child management in the classroom and outside with children. The survey (Appendix E) was used during classroom observations. As with the adult/child interactions it was difficult to separate each staff member from the group. The observations yielded a group total for techniques used. This outcome was met in all sites with the use of techniques 2, 4, 6, and 8 almost exclusively. Technique 6 of enforcement of limits with firmness was used frequently yet gently as there are many special needs children in the population of each classroom. The staff were diligent in expressing their approval with verbal praise and encouragement. All classrooms met the standard of use of

appropriate methods in 6 of 10 instances. The training course emphasized prevention strategies to use before management issues become more difficult. Several of the techniques taught were not on the checklist but were observed in the classrooms.

Discussion

The writer is satisfied that the solution chosen was the correct one to solve the problem in the work setting. As found by Jones, et al. (1993) a combination of techniques following training classes offered the staff in the writer's region many opportunities to explore the meaning of DAP and how to transfer it to their work sites. For the first time at the agency the trainer (the writer) and the supervisor (the writer) were consistent in the message and the follow up to "ensure that knowledge is translated appropriately into practice." (Koralek, Colker, and Dodge, 1993, p. ix) This emphasized the need for any trainer to keep the regional supervisors informed of the training concepts and materials covered so that the follow up can happen. The observations afforded the writer with several opportunities to see the staff in action with the children and to offer feedback and support for changed practice. The writer found that for some staff this project with the trainings was the first time that they had been formally introduced to the concept of DAP and the clear expectation that this was expected of them in the classroom. For parents and volunteers the introduction of DAP helped them understand why the classrooms looked as they did and why certain activities were planned. To some degree all staff demonstrated a greater understanding of DAP following trainings. Two staff went on and are currently taking their first college level course after completing all the agency trainings.

The child development director was very interested in the project and

feels satisfied that a model has been established for the agency's child development training for all staff. The broad range of training possibilities for all levels of skill make the model appropriate for the varying populations of adults in the classrooms. New staff coming to the agency will be required to take the basic child development training to orient them fully to the expectations of anyone in any classroom. A consistent message is now given to all staff about the expectations for their classroom practice and the agency has some assurance that all the staff have a baseline understanding of child development. This is consistent with the NAEYC lattice of professional development (Staff, 1994).

One of the teachers from the writer's region is considering facilitating the support group for another year. The book Growing Teachers is being read by her currently. She is currently enrolled in the CDA program and has the most experience of any teacher in the agency. The writer encouraged her to offer her skills to help other staff to tell their stories. (Jones, 1993) This group was seen to support and challenge teachers and other staff in a friendly manner where they could plan the agenda. This group operated as Severeide (1992) wrote that self study in a small group could be times for "guided reflection and non-evaluative conversation with peers." (p.1) This opened up several lively discussions.

The writer discovered several hidden talents in two staff when they were asked to participate as presenters in two sessions of the parent/volunteer training classes. They prepared appropriate learning experiences further demonstrating their understanding of DAP with adults as well as with children. These opportunities gave them a chance to increase their own self esteem and confidence. This also recognized the differences in the developmental levels of

the teachers in the region (Jones, 1993) and they served as role models for other staff. It is hoped that in the future more staff will be utilized as peer trainers.

The materials and syllabus for the parent/volunteer training course were recognized by the Head Start review team as very thorough and appropriate to prepare parents to volunteer/work in a classroom. They hoped that other parents would participate in the coming year and that training of a similar caliber about other aspects of Head Start would be initiated by the agency. The staff was very supportive of this course as it more thoroughly prepared parents/volunteers and substitutes to work in the classrooms with entry level skills. Three of the parents who participated in the course have been hired as employees in classrooms.

The mentor experiences were beneficial to both parties and offered a one on one opportunity for intense learning/teaching. The use of the COR instrument had been difficult for several of the staff. The mentor teachers had had more success in establishing systems to manage the use of the tool. These could be passed on to the "student" teachers with one result being an immediate rise in performance on the use of the COR. As questions arose the "student" could seek out the mentor and get immediate feedback and suggestions. Poelle (1993) discussed the ripple effect that can be created by a mentoring relationship. This was observed by the writer. As the relationship was successful mentoring was suggested by the "student" teacher to others as an appropriate and beneficial manner to learn a new skill.

The two particular skills assessed by the observations of the adult/child interaction methods and the child management behaviors of the staff were difficult to separate for individual staff persons. The classroom staff has been

trained to work as a team and the teacher is responsible to supervise the individual performances on a daily basis. It also became clear that the combination of children assigned to a classroom, the arrangement of the classroom space, the daily events in families' lives, and the staff preparation all had an impact on the challenges presented by children's behaviors. In one classroom a mental health aide was added to the staff as a result of the observations and documentation provided by the writer. The staff all demonstrated less rigidity as the year progressed. This contributed to the rise in quality of the services provided. (Arnett, 1989) More opportunities for children to make choices were observed in the final observation. The interactions were observed by the writer and by the mental health consultant. All the sites improved in this area as well. All the sites met the standard set in the proposed outcomes.

An unexpected outcome of the project was the request by another agency for the writer to provide trainings to a wider population. Three trainings were offered some of which were attended by staff from the writer's agency. The message in all these was consistent with the project that DAP is the method to provide the highest quality services to children and families. It was gratifying to the writer to hear the responses from participants that these trainings were beneficial to their practice.

The children in the agency program sites had the opportunity to experience a greater amount of developmentally appropriate practice throughout the program year in their classrooms and outdoors. The staff demonstrated growth in their understanding of DAP. The program director and the writer were satisfied that the proposed outcomes were met with the implementation of this practicum project.

Recommendations

The writer makes two recommendations following completion of this project for further work in this area:

1. A training calendar for the entire year should be given to staff as part of the preservice training so that they can plan their education for meeting their training goals. They will then know what additional outside training they will need to find.

2. A system of tracking the training and professional development activities of staff should be established.

Dissemination

The other regional supervisors in the agency have been notified of the results of this project. Through the education coordinator the plan for another year of training has been set. As new staff are hired they are informed of the training expectations.

The results of the project have been shared with the regional child development resource center and a workshop will be offered through the center for other agencies to participate in. A second agency that offers Head Start and child care has contracted with the writer to provide training for their staff that will include the results of this project.

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APPENDIX A

Checklist of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

	yes	no
1. Experiences are planned to meet children's needs in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth areas.		
2. Each child is seen as unique, with all differences accepted and considered in classroom planning.		
3. Self esteem and positive learning attitudes are fostered.		
4. The environment is set up to encourage active learning and exploration.		
5. Children are encouraged to make choices from many activities in a variety of learning areas.		
6. Children are expected to be active physically and mentally.		
7. Children work alone or in small groups most of the time.		
8. Materials and activities offer concrete experiences relevant to children's lives.		
9. Adults move around to facilitate involvement with activities.		
10. Staff expect more than one right answer, and expect children to experiment and problem solve.		
11. Staff use positive guidance, matching expectations of behaviors to developmental capabilities.		
12. Many opportunities for social skill development are offered.		
13. Language and literacy development activities are plentiful without writing and reading instruction being the emphasis.		
14. Children have opportunities to explore themselves and their relationship to their world through math, science, social studies, health, nutrition, music,and other areas of the curriculum.		

Yes No

15. Routines are set to keep children safe and secure.

16. Small muscle development is offered daily.

17. Opportunities to appreciate music and art is offered daily.

18. Motivation for learning by children is recognized as their curiosity and desire to learn.

19. Staff work with parents to share information and to work to plan appropriately for each child.

20. Children have opportunities each day to use large muscles in an outdoor learning environment.

SITE NAME_____

DATE OF OBSERVATION_____

OBSERVATION NUMBER_____
(one or two)

This checklist is based on the work by NAEYC in Bredekamp (1987).

APPENDIX B

Adult-Child Verbal Interaction Checklist

	yes	no
1. Staff respond to children's needs quickly.		
2. Staff respond to each child recognizing individual differences in style and ability to express needs and wants.		
3. Staff respond in a natural warm caring tone to children.		
4 Staff offer many opportunities for communication to children, engaging in one on one conversations.		
5.Staff listen to children, responding appropriately.		
6. Staff are at eye level when speaking and listening with children.		
7. Staff participate in children's play adding language when appropriate.		
8. Staff encourage completion of tasks with verbal support, attention, and physical closeness.		
9. Staff work to reduce stress in the classroom which is expressed by children's behaviors.		
10. Staff demonstrate respect for all children.		
11. Staff model self-control, problem solving skills, and wise decision making skills.		
12. Staff use a variety of verbal techniques to encourage language development such as questioning, repeating, and extending language.		
13. Staff can share times and words of humor with the children.		

SITE NAME_____

DATE OF OBSERVATION_____

This checklist is based on NAEYC guidelines in Bredekamp (1987).

APPENDIX C

Outdoor Learning Staff Survey

1. Why is is important for children to spend time outdoors?

2. For how long and how frequently should this be done?

3. What props should be available to children outdoors?

4. What equipment is your play area outdoors missing?

5. What do the children seem to enjoy the most?

6. What is not used in the outdoors area your site has?

7. How frequently is the area changed?

8. What do you enjoy most in the outdoors learning environment at your site?

SITE NAME_____

DATE OF OBSERVATION_____

DATE_____

APPENDIX D

Outdoor Checklist for Developmentally Appropriate Practice

	yes	no
1. Children have opportunity each day to be outdoors using large muscles.		
2. Activity outdoors is planned to encourage learning about the environment.		
3. Children have opportunity outdoors to be loud and move freely.		
4. Places are available for quiet play outdoors.		
5. Opportunities for art experiences are available.		
6. The outdoors area is safe and free of hazards.		
7. A variety of learning opportunities are offered outdoors in science, math, dramatic play, gardening, construction, water, sand.		
8. Adults move around facilitating learning.		
9. Opportunities for social skills development and problem solving are offered outdoors.		
10. Adults play with children.		
11. The adults work to extend and enrich play not restrict it.		

SITE NAME_____

DATE_____

Checklist based on Baker (1966).

APPENDIX E

Survey of Child Guidance Skills

How frequently were the following guidance styles used by the staff during the observation?

1. Direct guidance--Statement of what must be done with no choices offered

2. Indirect guidance--Suggestive requests which told what was to be done, but was not direct.

3. Manipulative--The request made in such as way that it used subtle influence to encourage compliance

4. Redirection/ distraction--stopping a behavior by diverting child's attention

5. Simple restriction--Calling attention to inappropriate behaviors by child by warning, reminding, with little explanation

6. Enforcement of limits with firmness--Made clear limits and followed through with enforcement

7. Belittling child--Lowered self esteem, discrediting activity of child

8. Approval--Gave child praise and encouragement for behaviors that approximated adult expectations

SITE NAME_____

DATE_____

Based on the work of Prescott , et al. (1967) as cited in Berk (1985).